



Shavuot: Loving Our Fellow Jew

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The halachic definition of hatred is the opposite of the definition of love. Love is empathetic connection. It's wanting to do good for another person because you view him as yourself. Hatred is detachment and alienation. Fulfilling the commandment of rebuking one's friend is about building connection. Avoid defensiveness by speaking to the person privately, and addressing the action itself. Train yourself to focus on the present. Don't bombard the person with past mistakes. Give the offender an escape hatch. Affirm that you value their intent to correct their wrongs. See the other person as yourself and review times in your own life where you made mistakes. Think how you would have wanted others to correct you.

What if the problem is the way the person is and not what he's done? Perhaps the two of you have very different personalities. Approach every situation by thinking of how you can help the person and what you can learn from him. The Torah forbids revenge.

When a person suffers an insult, he often feels vulnerable, small, and unable to cope. The feelings are increased by the other person who may seem powerful and frightening. The sweetness of revenge is in equalizing the relationship. If you cut off his leg, he will become vulnerable too.

But life isn't about feeling small or suffering pain. Hashem puts us in different situations to uplift us. If you feel vulnerable, you can utilize the feeling as a means to improvement. Taking revenge just belittles you and the other person. You become everything you disliked in the other person, uncompassionate, callous, and cheap. Bearing a grudge is still playing the same game. You don't get uplifted

by it. A better response would be to be brave and big, and to give the other person what he really needs, without speeches or smirks. In the worst case, he could ignore the fact that he didn't help you. In the best case, he'll regret what he's done.

Ona'ah is hurting another person with words. If you strike back by making the offender feel hurt and vulnerable you become what you despise. You might feel like the victor in the short run. But in the long run, you've made yourself smaller. See your opponent for what he is, a person who is critical and wants control and affection. Don't let him stay big in your mind. Bring him down to your level. Even better would be to raise yourself up and move into nurture mode. The reality is that someone criticized you. Stay in the present. Don't go backward.

If he's always been that way, then move on to the next step. Hashem wants you to realize how vulnerable you really are. Your job is to ask, "Where's my *tikun*?" Either I'll be a person who benefits others or I can say, "So that's how someone feels when you criticize him," or "It's no coincidence that this person crossed my path. How can I help him and what can I learn from him?"

The responsibility to draw up a clear contract between an employee and employer is on the employer. One should not wait till the job was completed to set a price. An employer is obligated to pay his workers before nightfall. If he doesn't have the money, he must tell his workers that their wages will be delayed. If an employer hired you knowing he doesn't have the money to pay you, you're obligated to take him to *beit din*. If you refrain from asking for your wages you are giving him inappropriate leeway. Parents are not responsible to pay for

damages done by their children as kids tend to be unpredictable. However, letting a child destroy other people's property is wrong.

Lashon hara affects the speaker, the listener, and the person being spoken about. The speaker may be saying something true but there's a vast difference between his truth and the real truth. Most times it is better to avoid negative speech, but sometimes as in the case of *shidduchim*, one could be required to speak. In such cases you can say, "I don't know, but I can tell you my experience." You can express what you found negative in a positive way. In cases where the issue could affect the person in the future, a *shaila* should be asked how to deal with the matter correctly.

Lashon hara may give you momentary attention. If you talk about people it puts you in a superior position. But when you say something negative it changes the way you look at people. You lose your ability to see the world accurately. You have to be careful not just for your own sake but for the listener's sake. You usually don't have the whole picture and people tend to hear what you didn't say.

There's a *mitzvah* to love a fellow Jew. One should speak well of people. Repeating positive stories about people makes you find the grace and goodness in Hashem as His soul filters down to the human soul. Give people respect by making eye contact with them, listening attentively while they speak, and valuing what they say. They will then reveal more of their positive self to you. Another way of bonding with others is to pray for them. Still another way of connecting is noticing what people need. By becoming a giver you become a more expanded person.



Mesillat Yesharim – Life's Purpose: Desire For Holiness

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

The Mesillat Yesharim discusses how one can acquire the trait of *zehirut* (vigilance). There are three categories of people: *shlomei hadaat*, *pechutim*, and the *hamon am*. The *shlomei hadaat* have a deep desire to do the will of Hashem. The *pechutim* are at a lesser level while the *hamon am* are the average people in Klal Yisrael at an even lower level. The *shlomei hadaat* aspire to perfection. They seek any possibility to find the truth and to come closer to Hashem. Their love for Hashem is like the love of a groom for his bride. Whatever she desires he will give her.

The Chovot Halevovot writes that just like water and fire cannot coexist, so too this world and the next world cannot mix. Eisav was bewildered when his brother Yaakov came with a large number of sheep and many children. He assumed that Yaakov had received the blessing of spirituality while he was given the blessing of materialism. How could Yaakov have both? He did not know that although fire and water cannot merge they can coexist if there's a division between them. That division is Torah. The *shlomei hadaat* know this. They work to accomplish in

this world, while simultaneously creating a connection with Hashem by doing good deeds and refining their middot.

The Ramchal writes that man was created to take pleasure in the radiance of Hashem. In order to merit this, one must constantly strive to reach higher levels in *avodat Hashem*. Thinking that it is ok to sin sometimes because Hashem forgives us anyway is wrong. Just doing the bare minimum *mitzvot* and being as uninvolved as possible is wrong too. The *shlomei hadaat* don't think this way. They only ask for forgiveness after they have sinned. But before that, they try their hardest to avoid evil and to come closer to Hashem.

Rav Soloveitchik notes that people discover unbelievable strength within themselves when they desire greatly to do *mitzvot*. Determination and motivation can enable a person to almost superhuman accomplishments. Yaakov was able to roll the huge stone off the well like a cork off a bottle, because he deeply desired to do kindness for Rachel. The *shlomei hadaat* go beyond their *kochot hanefesh* to do the will of Hashem.

The *pechutim* are less inspired. They say, "Whatever we are obligated to do we will do, nothing more." They need to be motivated. They must know that the more *mitzvot* a person does in this world, the closer he can get to Hashem and the greater his share will be in *olam haba*. The *pechutim* ask, "Why do we have to tire ourselves with stringencies? Why is it necessary to be so strict? We are not *resha'im*. Why do we have to drive ourselves to a higher level?"

The third group is the *hamon am*, the masses. Their relationship with Hashem is one of reward and punishment. The Mesillat Yesharim tells us that punishment is good. It not only keeps us on our toes but brings us closer to Hashem. It makes us realize that Hashem cares about us. Reward and punishment is not unique to Klal Yisrael. But the beauty of Judaism is that punishment is not a way to destroy us, but a way to bring us back to Hashem.

Questions & Answers For Today's Jewish Woman – Class #2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Question:

I'm going through a rough period in my life. I've been getting bad reviews at work, despite working really hard. I'm also struggling with fertility problems, to the point where we are now starting to look for specialists to investigate what is wrong. I feel like the stress is sucking the happiness out of me and I'm losing the person I used to be. How can I lighten up a bit and enjoy life again?

Answer: Everyone likes success. Nobody enjoys failure. The fact that you don't feel successful at work because you're not getting good reviews is making you feel unsuccessful as a person. Let's assume you're an actuary. If you're getting bad reports as an actuary, it only means that one fragment of who you are

isn't successful or isn't viewed by other people as successful.

I find that young people today have a very different relationship to work than what I grew up with. For them, work is a means of social expression and gratification. For me, work is where you make your contribution to society and where you earn money so you can sustain your family. So if you're doing the best you can and presenting your accounts correctly and on time, even if your supervisor isn't all that pleased with you, give yourself permission to feel good.

The other segment of your question is less clear to me. We live in an era where there are specialists who can help us in so many

different ways. Anytime you go to a doctor for any reason at all you should feel thankful that Hashem opened the door that could lead to healing. The reason you feel stressed may be because you don't feel that your situation is normal. Nobody has it all together. Everyone has little quirks in their life that they are forced to deal with. For some it may be shalom bayit problems. For others it may be health issues or trouble maintaining their inner equilibrium. Everyone has challenges, except for the people who you don't know too well, who you imagine must be leading a perfect life. Hashem is presenting you with *nisyonot*. Flow with it. If you view your trials as opportunities for growth, they will lead you to ultimate joy and trust in Hashem.